

## better than this by **caffeinescripts**

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**Summary:**

“Do you have any idea where we’re going?” She teased, glancing at him from the passenger seat.

He didn’t. “Definitely.” He nodded, considering how long it’d take to drive them somewhere actually cool. Chicago would be a nightmare because of traffic, but there was nothing that they hadn’t really done already in Indianapolis.

“Liar.” She grinned, reaching for his hand. Idly, she traced his scar with her fingers, her head bopping along to the mixtape she put on. She’d grinned wickedly when she pulled it out, his handwriting messy and somewhat smudged, but ‘For Nancy. Valentines Day 1985.’ was still legible on it from last year.

## better than this

### Author's Note:

dedicated to jackie + geena as per usual, my motivators. enjoy some teeth rotting fluff i barely posted in time :) & check out my tumblr (@nancyswhlr) if you're interested, i take requests over there. happy valentines day everyone!

Nancy struggled not to roll her eyes as she shut her locker, nothing but cheesy cut out hearts and posters about chaperones needed for the middle school's dance tonight surrounded her. She felt another wave of relief hit, a constant ever since the acceptance letters came in, they didn't have to worry about that kind of stuff anymore. Last minute community service hours to impress schools were a thing of the past now. They just had to focus on finally graduating. And maintaining their GPA's, of course, so Columbia or NYU didn't revoke their admissions.

She struggled not to laugh at the obviously last minute bear Carol was hugging as she skimmed the hall, her girls with varying presents from drugstore chocolate and roses. There was a time she would've thought that was sweet, hell that time was two years ago, but it was pretty easy to see now that it didn't mean anything substantial. Not really, not in the scheme of things. The entire premise of Valentine's Day was trying to prove to everyone you were actually in love, and while she normally didn't partake (or encourage) in her boyfriend's pretentious attitudes, this one she had to agree on. They didn't boycott the holiday, although it was hard not to with how cheesy the whole thing was, but she much preferred the low key way of celebrating with her boyfriend.

Although last year she had gotten roses. Yellow ones, because red was too overdone and he stammered out they were bright and bold like her. Jonathan was nervous about the entire evening despite the fact she loved it. And him. But they hadn't said it then. But she told him she loved spending the entire night with him, so that was close enough for that time.

This year they had to cart their brothers to school in the morning, like normal, and she'd gotten a kiss. Like normal. Well, it lasted a little longer, long enough for the boys to make sounds of disgust despite the gifts in their backpacks for their respective relationships ("Shut up. Mike you have 3 different colognes on and Lucas is literally holding roses!" Mike had some too, tucked away). But Nancy was genuinely happier with today being a normal day with him, even though they were spending the night together. Not that they didn't, also, normally do that.

"Hey." Just the person she'd been thinking about had walked up to her. Nancy grinned, barely getting the first syllable of her response out before his lips were on hers.

"Hey." She mumbled against his lips after a moment, pulling away. A question played on her features, raising an eyebrow. In the year and couple months they've been together, Jonathan never really initiated PDA. Unless he was so overwhelmed with an emotion he forgot about his general shyness, or Nancy had initiated and he went along with it. Sure, there were kisses in the hallways, but it wasn't quite like him.

"What's up?" He wondered, quietly, not moving at all.

Still very much in his embrace, Nancy shrugged. "Nothing. Sick of all these in love people." She scrunched up her face as she spoke, as if she were disgusted.

Jonathan nodded along, sympathetic. "They suck, don't they?"

"The worst." She let her fingers run through his hair.

Jonathan grinned, not being able to hold in his laughter as he spoke. "Good thing we're not like that."

Nancy couldn't help but laugh, trying and failing to keep up the facade. "Definitely. You know, I'm not even sure I like you." She teased, tilting her head up to kiss him once more before stepping out of the embrace.

"Ouch." He joked, Nancy collecting the rest of their things before walking out to his car.

“The boys are gonna try to convince us to give them rides to their dates tonight.” She said, conversationally.

“Not Will.” Jonathan shrugged, proudly.

Nancy rolled her eyes. “You first have to try to convince me Will would want to go out with a girl.” She teased, lovingly. Jonathan laughed, agreeing with her.

“Well, the others can ride their bikes?” He suggested.

Nancy shrugged. “Steve could take them.” She hummed, knowing he earned his reputation as town babysitter by this point. He'd graduated last year but stuck around anyways.

“Great idea. We have better things to do tonight.” He was saying as they approached his car, unlacing their hands to climb in and wait for their brothers (and their dates).

It had, overall, been a quiet night. They debated on going out or staying in, considering every restaurant was going to be crowded and overpriced. The movies would be a nightmare. Plus they had an empty house, considering Will was at Dustin's while his mom and Hopper had gone out. But Nancy had on a pretty dress and curled her hair for the day, and without thinking about it Jonathan took her hand and told her he wanted to take her somewhere. She sneakily grabbed a bottle of wine before they left promising his mom wouldn't miss it, having a feeling they were going to end up alone in his car somewhere. Not that she minded that.

“Do you have any idea where we're going?” She teased, glancing at him from the passenger seat.

He didn't. “Definitely.” He nodded, considering how long it'd take to drive them somewhere actually cool. Chicago would be a nightmare because of traffic, but there was nothing that they hadn't really done already in Indianapolis.

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Jonathan grinned, still contemplating. The closer they got to the edge of town gave him an idea, and somehow they ended up at the lake near the border of town.

"The lake?" She asked, turning to face him. It was the one at the quarry, or below it. Nancy recognized it instantly as he pulled up, they'd been here before. Quite a few times actually, specifically in summer when it was warm enough to enjoy the sun and water. Unfortunately, February in Indiana was still the middle of winter, otherwise she would suggest they skinny dip. "You want to take a swim?" She teased him anyways.

"No." Jonathan laughed, flipping his hand so they were holding each other's correctly. "I just want to be with you. If there's somewhere else you want to go..."

Nancy shook her head. "No, no way. This is nice." She reassured him, squeezing his hand. "As long as I get to spend Valentine's Day with you, as cliche as that sounds." She was meant to be joking but the look in her eyes took Jonathan's breath away.

After a little while, they somehow ended up sitting on the roof with their plastic cups of alcohol. It, thankfully, had stopped snowing a week ago. But the chill in the air lingered, and it wasn't five minutes before Jonathan was shrugging off his coat to give to Nancy, who was shaking in the thin fabric of her dress, despite insisting she didn't need his coat when they stepped out.

"You'll be cold now." She scolded him, curling into it as she said so.

Jonathan shrugged. "I dressed appropriately." It was true, he was wearing one of Nancy's favorites sweaters on him.

Nancy gave him a look of disbelief. "I left my coat on your couch in the midst of this whole romantic gesture thing!"

"You remembered the wine though." he teased, both of them nursing

their drinks.

“It was more important.” She laughed, as if to prove her point she took a sip. A comfortable silence fell over them and Nancy leaned against the car, her boyfriend’s arm around her waist. She weighed the cup in her hands as if contemplating. “I’m going to miss nights like these.” She mumbled. “Everything is going to..be different.” She continued, offhandedly. It was true, they’d both be moving to New York in a few months. “I mean, the kids are growing up, they’re on actual dates tonight, and we’re going to college...” She shrugged. “Everything is going to change soon.”

Jonathan turned from his view of the lake to face her (a more beautiful view anyway if you asked him). He removed his grip around her waist to look at her better, his hand landing near hers. “Not everything.” He said softly, shrugging a bit. “Not us.”

Nancy couldn’t stop the smile from breaking out on her face, her fingers brushing his. “You’re right. Not us.” Maybe it was on an impulsive, or it felt like forever since she last said it, or the fact he was so close it was making her dizzy despite the fact they’ve been at this thing for almost two years now. Still, she never felt like she meant something more than when she told him. “I love you.”

Now it was Jonathan’s turn to smile, her eyes looking directly into his as she said it. That was a normal reaction for him, he always grinned and normally kissed her instantly. It was fine, she was used to hearing it back by now in between kisses, an unfathomable amount of happiness normally radiating from the both of them because she actually was in love with him. And he was in love with her. And they’d never had a reason to be happier.

The same glint in his eyes lit up, the look on his face could light up all of Hawkins. Hell, all of Indiana. “I love you, too.” He said back, already kissing her by the time he got the last word off his tongue. Nancy was impressed, she was pretty sure that’s the longest he’s waited to kiss her after saying it.

It lasted a while, getting more passionate before Jonathan pulled back. “Uh, wait.” He halted their kissing, which was leading more into a makeout session that would more than likely lead to them

having sex on the hood of his car. Nancy already looked out of breath, her lips parted and following his despite the confused look on her face. “Just before we, uh, can we do presents?” he all but mumbled, breathlessly as well.

Nancy nodded, having a strong feeling they’d pick up on this later anyways. “Yeah, yeah.” She nodded, detangling herself from him to both of their dismay. The February chill felt worse without each others body heat as she jumped off the hood and grabbed her gift from his back seat.

She had to admit she struggled. Christmas had really hit the nail on the head with the polaroid she’d gotten him, and she had a really good feeling about concert tickets for his birthday coming up. But he was also hard to shop for in the way that she could put a pair of Mike’s old converse in front of him as a gift and he’d still be grateful for the effort and tell her he loved them. She felt good about this gift though. She went ahead and sat back down on the hood, having a slight feeling he was nervous about her gift as she did so. Not that he had a reason to be.

To spare him of his nerves, she offered her bag first. It was somewhat small, with pretty wrapping he knew Nancy probably worked on perfecting for a good 30 minutes. He grinned as he grabbed a box in wrapping paper first. Ripping it open, it was revealed to be a new walkman.

He didn’t necessarily need a new one, and she knew that. The one he had now was old, but it still played the tapes well enough. Despite the fact he used it almost constantly and had been forever.

“I know,” She started, seeing the look on his face. He was shocked because in his head this was way too nice of a gift, especially since his was still technically fine. “But you need a new one. You’ve had that thing forever. Plus,” She smiled, a knowing look on her face. “Think of how much better it’ll be to listen to this one your new one.” She teased, gesturing back to the bag. Jonathan gave her a confused look before pulling out the second part of his present. To his surprise, it was a mixtape. ‘For Jonathan. Happy Valentines Day 1986’ written in her clean and pretty handwriting across it.

“I know you’re the one better at making them.” She teased, god only knows how many mixtapes he’s made for her since they started dating. They were always personalized, always putting things he knew she’d like or hoped she would if she didn’t listen to before. He was always right but she got them often enough as little presents. She wasn’t really planning on making one for him until she was listening to a new album and more and more songs reminded her of him. She knew it wasn’t really her thing, she wasn’t the music snob of the couple, but she thought of how much it meant to her whenever he gave her his and wanted him to experience that feeling as well. “But I thought I’d give it a shot.”

Any nerves or regret she worried about vanished when she saw how touched he was. She couldn’t exactly place it but there was something so meaningful, and almost intimate, about giving someone a mixtape. Especially since no one ever made him one before, she was glad she was his first (and only). She was also glad he felt the way she did when she was given them by him.

“I love it. Thank you.” He didn’t give her a chance to respond before he was kissing her gently. “What’s even on here anyways?” He wondered, flipping over the tape while Nancy laughed.

She shrugged. “Songs that I thought you’d like when I heard them, songs that make me think of you, and a few of my favorites because I couldn’t resist.” Nancy grinned devilishly. Jonathan grimaced slightly at the fact there was probably at least one Cyndi Lauper song on here, but he couldn’t hold in a laugh.

“Seriously, thank you. You’re incredible.” Nancy felt a slight rush of heat to her cheeks at how sincerely he said that.

She tried to laugh it off as she nodded. “You’re welcome.” She stared at him, still taking in his gifts as he shifted the box around, the grin still present on his face. “So, do I get mine?” She prompted, lightly.

Jonathan nodded, genuinely forgetting, as he set his gifts aside. “Oh yeah, yeah! Sorry.”

Before she could say anything, like it was fine she was just messing with him, Jonathan was pulling a small neatly wrapped package out

from his pocket. It was so tiny that it must've been a bitch to wrap, Nancy suspected he got his mom's help with how meticulous it looked. He looked like he was contemplating on saying something before handing her the box. "I, uh, well I'll explain when you see..."

Nancy nodded, raising an eyebrow as she tore off the paper anyways. Inside the small box housed an even smaller velvet box, the kind that normally held rings. Nancy felt her mouth fall open and her brows crease as she opened up the gray box. Inside sat a thin gold band, a pattern of gems wrapping around it. It was simple but stunning.

For the first time in her life, or at the least one of the few times in her life, she was speechless. She stared in awe at the ring for a couple more seconds before finally looking up to him. She wasn't even sure she'd be able to get a question in at the rate Jonathan started explaining quickly.

"It's not an, uh, engagement-" He shook his head, trying to word what he was saying properly. "It's a promise ring."

Nancy nodded slowly, that making more sense. Her mouth made an "Oh" shape as she said it while her eyes went back to the ring, letting that sit for a moment. She didn't know what scared her more, Jonathan proposing being a very real option in her head or how quickly and willing she was to say yes. Instead of thinking about that too much, she put her focus back on him. She was still at a loss for words, but for the first time, again in one evening, Jonathan was making up for that.

"I love you, Nancy. I'm always going to be in love with you. And I know we're moving in the fall and, like you said, everything is going to change. But I just want you to know I'm here, through all of it. I-I see my future with you. You are my future." He confessed to her, never in his life looking more honest and sincere.

For some reason, Nancy wanted to cry. It was all a huge cliche, sitting on the hood of her boyfriend's car, underneath the stars, in front of a lake, Jonathan Byers telling her he loves her. But she never felt happier, she wanted this moment to last the rest of her life. She didn't even realize she had a few tears on her lashes and Jonathan was looking at her in the nervous way that when you pour your heart

out to someone and you're waiting for their response. After a second, Jonathan was talking again.

"Not to put any pressure on you. I know it's a lot and I don't know if you want or have even thought about me being in your future-"

Nancy's senses finally kicked in, breaking out of her in love gaze to seriously look at him. "Of course." She'd cut him off. "Of course you're in my future." Before she could see his reaction, her hands were on his face and she was kissing him again. It was slow and she hoped it conveyed everything she felt, that she didn't know how to put into words.

The kiss ended when Nancy pulled away, still incredibly close to his face as she spoke though. "You are my future, too. I love it. And you." She smiled, letting her gaze linger for a second to actually see his reaction. She wished he could be as happy as he was in these kinds of moments forever. "Put it on?"

Jonathan nodded eagerly, nearly against her, as his finger brushed hers to grab the box. Not breaking eye contact he slipped the ring on her finger. Nancy tried to ignore the chills she got, shaking her head. They were still too young to think about getting engaged, although this felt like a step in that direction.

"It's gorgeous." She nearly whispered as she brought her hand, that was still laced with his, closer to her eyes. It was, she knew she'd never love another piece of jewelry like this.

Jonathan smiled again, squeezing her hand. "I'm glad you like it."

"I love it." she corrected him, the intensity in her eyes proving she meant it. She let their hands drop, still intertwined, as she leaned up to capture his lips with hers.

The kiss lingered this time, both of them delirious with happiness and content and love. She didn't even realize how long they'd been sitting out, or how cold they both were, until one hand of Jonathan's landed on her knee while the other went to her waist. It was getting far more passionate and intense and Nancy suspected they were picking up where they left off earlier. She broke away to take a breath as she

looked up at him. “Maybe we should take this back in the car?” Jonathan nodded, and she could feel the warmth of his breath. In one easy motion he was helping her off of the hood, continuing to kiss her back to the car.

They headed back to his house after a while, dodging the interrogation she’d get from her mom and her annoying little brother remarking she was engaged or something when he ended up seeing her present. Jonathan insisted they play her mixtape as they drove. While it wasn’t exactly all his taste he loved it, and her, more than he could fathom.

She ended up staying at the Byers’ place that night, tangled in Jonathan’s sheets with him. She woke up to her boyfriend soundfully sleeping with her as sunlight streamed through the window, the ring of on her finger catching some of the light. Then, eventually, they got up to make coffee while she stayed wearing Jonathan’s shirt, the entire time thinking how she couldn’t imagine a future better than this.